Swami Ramanand Teerth Marathawada University Nanded,
Maharashtra, India

GENDER, CULTURE AND POLITICS IN THE SELECT PLAYS OF POILE SENGUPTA: A STUDY

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Submitted by

Mr. Gulab Karim Shaikh

Under the Supervison of

Dr.Durgesh B. Ravande

Assistant Professor of English
K K M College Manwath
Dist.Parbhani(MS)

Research Centre

School of Languages, Literature and Cultural Studies

Swami Ramanand Teerth Marathwada University Campus Nanded

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Gender, Culture and Politics in the Select Plays of Poile Sengupta : A Study

The present research study proposes to make an analysis of gender, culture and politics in the select plays of Polie Sengupta such as ***Mangalam* (1993)**, ***Inner laws* (1994)**, ***Keats was A Tuber*(1996)**, ***Alipha* (2001)**, ***Thus Spake Shoorpankha, so said shakuni (2001)***, and ***Samara's Song(2007).***Poile Sengupta, earlier Ambika Gopalkrishnan is the foremost Indian playwright who unearths the formation of her feminist dramatizing and establish her rebellion stance exploring and presenting the issues of gender, culture, myth, politics history, globalizations and colonization etc. The plays of Poile Sengupta are noteworthy in setting up the basic framework of how gender, culture, politics are the real motives behind violence, discrimination and inequality.

Gender is the most debatable and discussed issue in feminism and postmodern literary world. The implication of this concept is really wider. Gender should not be defined biologically hence it is not restricted to biological aspects instead it means a cultural constitution of notions concerning femininity or masculinity and the ways in which these serve ideologically to maintain gendered identities. Sex is natural but gender is manmade, which oppose the notion of biology. It represents socially acquired and acceptable forms of being either male or female. It defines our cloth pattern habits,likes, choices,career, education, business, desires, sport etc.

This stereotypical notion of gender is common in all the cultural clan of the world. In Indian culture it creates so many differences. It influences on gender, culture, myth, politics, language. The creation of differences offers secondary status to women, dalits, poors,labourers, because in Indian culture caste plays a vital role in establishing anything. Comparing to the rest of the cultures of the world the impact of caste is highly marking in India, In defining gender, culture, politics, myths, languages etc. Since longer time in India caste defines the status, honor prestige, of a person even without the caliber and potential. It defines the structure of community, rituals, food habits , professions , likes and dislikes. Tragic to mention that education could not demolish the establish caste system of India. Poile Sengupta through her plays successfully exposes the differences of these issues either in mythical, preindustrial, undeveloped and globalised ages.

Culture is the most complicated word in the English language says Raymond Williams. Cultural studies find its origin in the British cultural studies movement of 1950s and late 1960s in the writing of Richard Hoggart, Stuart Hall and Raymond Williams. Culture is a broader concept that defines the pattern of human knowledge which imbibes customs, beliefs, social

formations as well as racial, religious,political,social traits of groups or group of people. It also denotes to our acquaintance and familiarization with humanities, fine arts, science, business, rituals and conventional and intellectual pursuits. It is an unification of various social practices orient to gender, culture, and politics.

A political inquiry helps to comprehend the prevailing political system, its values, ideas and norms. In this regard George Orwell aptly comments "The opinion that art should have nothing to do with politics is itself a political attitude". It means a conscious use of politics in literature would make it an effective aid of social transformation, because for the artist, the political historical events are more fundamental than the factual events or facts. Poile Sengupta in her plays remarkably uses the political drives of human relations, emotions and events. **Samaras Song** (2008) completely devoted to the contemporary politics and devaluation of democratic values of our country. Every incident in the world is organizing attempt of politics. Poile Sengupta through her characters and incidents in the play analyses the role of politics in human lives.

Mangalam (1993) is not only about language rather it deals with serrated relationship behind ostensibly normal households. It is about vulnerability of woman across all strata of society and in varied households and tenderness and spirit that is so often brutally suppressed. ***Inner Laws*** **(1994)** exposes the traditional hostility between mothers in laws and daughters in law a relationship born of the joint family system where two women, usually strangers to each other, are forced to share a home, a kitchen and in a sense affection of the same man. The play makes a multi layered allusions to the Indian epics. The play ridicules societal issues such as our approach to education and learning, our ludicrous notions of female attractiveness and absurd lifestyle. It analyses the impact and influence of newly aroused mores such as beauty, fashion and entertainment. ***Mangalam*** (1993) deals with the metropolitan life of Chennai and the play opens after the death of a woman character Mangalam. In the present play Revathi, Thanagam ,Usha , Vaithi , these women and their lives confined by gender dominance and politics. The politics of human relationships is the result of changing cultural dimensions of the world. The decison policy of Dorai and his words always reflects the dominating self control aspects. ***Inner Laws*** (1994) is a presentation of woman's world in a male dominating society. Woman in any context, age, and period is limited to male choices and their male counterparts choices are their choices and desires ultimately. The play exactly shows the politics of women in their home where two women always tries to defeat other one. It shows the impact and influence of TV culture on middle class Indian society.

Keats was a Tuber **(1996)** deals with notion of ideal colonialism. The play is set in the staffroom of English department of a small town college. It represents the whole educations system of India as well as the impact of English language. It analyses the issue of mother tongue and regional languages which are always the best medium of education and expressions. The play also analyses the issues of gender, culture and politics in the appearances of all characters. Damini the innocent girl commits suicide at the end because she disappoints in the choice of her

love. Mrs. Nathan, Sarala maintaining the desires and choices of family members and relatives to continue their happy life. Human relations are in desperate need to repair because cultural dimensions and globalization departed the basic emotions. ***Alipha*** **(2001)** the word signifies first letter of 'Urdu' language analyses a parallel story of social activist and a politician in small town. The play touches on a small town politics on the efforts of activist in the development process, on social and economic inequality, but these issues are really the backdrops to human emotions like love, lust, greed, anger,hate and revenge.

Thus Spake Shoorpankha, So Said Shakuni **(2001)** set in a crowded airport in India a having the background of 11th September attack of Osama- Bin- Laden on world tradecentre. The present play is the exposition of Indian myth of Ramayana and Mahabharata and only two characters of the play signifies an evil lady Shoorpankha of Ramayana and conspirator uncle of Kaurava 'Shakunimama'. The play challenges the conventional vilification of Shoorpankha and Shakuni and presents them differently, not only in the narrative but also in stage structure and technique. ***Samara's Song*** **(2007)** is explicitly a political play which explores the politics of good governance in a democracy; it also reflects the politics inherent in all human relationships. The ultimate tragedy is of those who cannot articulate those who remain exploited. The play uses a modified version of the Greek chorus and the Indian Sutradhar.

The Research Problem:

The study examines the issues of gender, culture and politics in the select plays of Poile Sengupta. These issues are always at the forefront of developed and undeveloped countries and culture. In spite of globalization and westernization in all spheres of life the innate human longing for individual identity continues to remain a major tour de force in both life and literature. The study of gender, culture and politics in the select plays of Polie Sengupta will explore these issues and their existence in Indian cultural clans leading to categorization and discrimination.

Objectives of the Study:

The objectives of the present research study are to analyze the gender, culture and politics in the six select plays of Poile Sengupta. Even after continued years the major issues of humanity leading to oppression remains the same. Some of the objectives are noted down below.

1) To interpret the issues of gender, culture and politics in the select plays of Poile Sengupta.

2) To comprehend the role of myth, history, language, culture in maintaining the social formation.

3) To establish Poile Sengupta as the leading playwright exploring the routes of suppression.

4) To present a globalized and Westernize Indian society and its differences.

5) To inquire about all the dominant forces and their roles in creating past, present and future of Indian civilization.

Hypothesis:

It is assumed that the plays of Poile Sengupta denote the issues of gender, culture and politics. Poile Sengupta the representative voice of Indian English Drama uses myth, language, history, globalization, modernization, post modernity, westernization to establish her theory. It is believed that unless and until we peep into plays of Poile Sengupta we will not able to diagnose the real motives behind inferiority complex in her plays.

Research Methodology:

Depending on the text matter, parameters would be developed and applied for perceiving and diagnosing text from gender, culture and politics. However, the research design use in this study in one of the exploratory, analytical and interpretative type.

Review of Literature:

After the great playwrights Vijay Tendulkar, Mohan Rakesh, Satish Alekar , Mahesh Elkunchawar , Habib Tanvir and Girish Karnad , Poile Sengupta is the leading contemporary playwright who makes her plays successful on the stage and in the minds of readers and audience. Her plays are thought provoking dealing with the issue of the human lives. She has been writing for the children . Her collection of plays published in the book *Women Center Stage: the Dramatist and the Plays by Routledge.* As far as secondary resources on Poile Sengupta and her plays concern are available in less quantity. The present study of her select plays would explore a new inside to the branch of literature and knowledge: therefore, the present research work is original in nature. Some of the observations relevant to the review of literature are as follow:

1. The book *Women Centre Stage: The Dramatist and The Play* is the collection of six select plays of Poile Sengupta.
2. In the article construction of Feminity in Poile Sengupta's *Mangalam(*1993) Dr. Tanu Gupta examines the role of gender and subordinate status of women . In the present article she explores the cultural, social and political bonding of Indian women which causes to oppression.
3. In the research article Struggle and Expression: Selected plays of Manjula Padmabhan , Poile Sengupta and Dina Mehta Minakshi Kaushik tries to analyze struggle of Indian women foe expression, exploration , desires, choices controlled by man made aspects. Language is the code control by the gender leading to discrimination.

4. In the article Re-Drawing boundaries of the canon Sumita Parmar presents the development of Indian women dramatist and change in their way of thinking leading towards stronger image of Indian Women.
5. In the book Poetics, plays and performances: The Politics of Modern Indian Theatre Vasudha Dalmia gives the analysis of politics in the theatre of India. She includes the integral role of politics in shaping the modern Indian Theatre.
6. In the doctoral thesis of M . Shivpriya submitted to Pondicherry university she analyses the plays of Poile Sengupta in the perspectives of in equal social political conflicts.
7. In the article Inner Laws: A Critique of Feminine Bonding Dr. Arti Khindari explores the real motives and dimensions behind Indian women's suppression. She focuses on the gender issue from different perspective.

Scope and Limitations of Research:

This research would deals with six select plays of Poile Sengupta. The select plays comprise ***Mangalam*(1993) *Inner Laws* (1994), *Thus Spake Shoorpankha, so said Shakuni* (2001), *Keats was a Tuber* (1996), *Alipha* (2001), *Samaras song* (2007)**. Consequently as per the requirement an attempt would be made to study other plays, interviews,Articles, of this author to deliberate the standpoint for comparison as well as for cross analysis. However, this research would be limited to the issues of gender, culture and politics in the six select plays of Poile Sengupta.

Contemporary Relevance and significance of the Study:

The exploration of these plays in the perspective ofgender,culture and politics would be widely essential to understand the dimensions of inferiority .There are diverse approaches to study literature,however,the issues taken for consideration would create consciousness about human relationships, history, myth, hegemony, ideology and discrimination in Indian society. Information technology, science, globalization and westernization have deeply influenced our lives but still in metropolitan families and societies as well as rural families and societies gender, culture, and politics havebeen playing the integral part. This study would elaborate through the plays. The study may open an avenue for research interpreted in exploring the dramatic world of Poile Sengutpa.

Plan of the Research:

I. Chapter I :

This chapter intends to analyze a review of Indian English Theatre and its contemporary status. This will analyze the wider acceptance of the concepts of gender, culture and politics as well as documents the biographical and literary contribution of Poile Sengupta. More particularly it is analyses of the issues such as gender, culture and politics in the plays and formation of Poile Sengupta's position in contemporary Indian Drama.

II. Chapter II :

This chapter would be a detailed study of the concept gender and its relevance and implication in the six select plays. This chapter would narrate, analyze, and evaluate gender and its role in constructing the themes in the plays of Poile Sengupta. The characters, events, incidents in her plays are ample to study the role of gender in constructing the cultural pattern of the society and submissive creation of norms. In the play ***Mangalam (1993)*** characters such as Thangam, Usha, Vaithi, Kamala ,in ***Keats Was A Tuber (1996)*** Sarala ,Damini, Mrs.Nathan and all the characters of ***Inner Laws (1994)*** and their lives are moulded, constructed, created by gender politics and its differences. In ***Thus Spake Shoorpankha, So Said Shakuni (2001)*** female representative character of Shoorpankha narrates the ill treatment she suffers because of gender difference and politics. She narrates,

Woman-: you know what they did to me…the two brothers…they laughed…they laughed at me they teased me…mocked me…The older one said, ask my brother…he might want you…the younger one said …I can't marry without my brothers consent…ask him…They tossed me this way and that, as if…as if I did not deserve anymore respect. As if I was…a broken plaything."Sengupta with the use of myth, history and contemporary time represents the situation of all ages. She explores the real motives of women's suppression which offers the secondary and miserable status to women due to gender discrimination.

III. Chapter III:

This chapter will detail the relevance of culture in both life and literature. It would explore its wider acceptance and existence along with gender and politics. To establish this argument all the six select plays will be taken in consideration.Culture imbibes several norms, tradition, rituals, custom and beliefs. Every cultural clan of the world creates ladder to maintain its significance and role. Indian culture also consist several norms where woman is always the matter of subordination. Caste plays a vital role in Indian marriages and rituals and inter-caste marriages are no less than big sins.Rules of every activity is fixing to the persons or group of persons. Treatment to Dalit, poor's, laborer is no longer dehumanizing. Poile Sengupta analyses

the cultural differences so well in her plays. The play **Mangalam (1993)** describes the humiliation of Revathy, Mangalam, Thangam, Chitra, who are the victim and representative pf cultural codification. **Inner Laws** (1994) examines coded relationships of mother in law and daughter law where two women are rivals of one another even though both are the victims of same jeopardy. The play very well presents the impact of technology, globalization but still the causes of suppression remains the same. The innate desire and misery of women remains the same even after the so long struggle and efforts where no woman is allow to change the weight of culture from their shoulders is the echo of the play **Alipha.(2005).**All these aspects will be taken in consideration of this research.

IV. Chapter IV:

This chapter would be a study of politics and its indoctrination in human lives. It will analyze politics of gender, human relationships, myth, education, culture. It will also explore the role of politics in Indian theatre. Politics is the root cause of every human activity. Women characters in **Mangalam (1993)** and **Inner Laws (1994)** are representatives of gender politics. Keats Was A Tuber (1996) is the narration of politics of education. The education system Britishers employed in India and the role of English language is not sufficient to express the feelings and sentiments compare to our own mother tongue. In all her plays Poile Sengupta defines the politics of human relationships in a dignified way. **Alipha(2001)** narrates the story of a social activist and a politician of a small town contains a male and a female character which examines the lives of human being from gender, culture and politics an defines the power of politics. **Samara's Song (2007)** is explicitly a political defines the politics of human relationships and good governance. The words of a blind man in **Samara's Song (2007)** aptly points out the contemporary demoralization of our country's politics and democracy.

Blind Man-: Let me see now…It's not the year when Danae that whore opened herself

to…no,no…This is hey! Is democracy born yet? That other whore who simpers on the streets and dances naked in palaces? Democracy! How she can fool them all (takes a step, stumbles.) Hey! Where are you…you blather mongers? How dare you leave me in the middle of I don't know what… (289)

V. Chapter V :

This chapter would be the summing up of the arguments and observations recorded in earlier chapters. It would pinpoint and analyze,elaborate the findings leading to select plays in gender,culture and politics.This chapter would co-relate and test the objectives to

record findings and see if the answer of the posed questions are discovered.It is observed that gender, culture and politics at the forefront of human lives . It collects the lives of all strata persons directly and indirectly. These issues dominate in myth, history, culture, language and it offers a dividing structure of society where no two human beings are treated as equal.

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Research Supervisor **Research Student**

Dr.Durgesh B.Ravande **Gulab Karim Shaikh**